Wellbeing, community, mental health and the built environment: understanding and maximising the connection.

Rhiannon Corcoran
Coverage

- What is wellbeing?
- What is community wellbeing?
- Some evidence about the relationship between built environment and well-being
- The What Works Centre for Wellbeing - Community Evidence Programme planned outputs.
- How do we understand the links between Wellbeing and Built Environment?
- What policy and practice steps are needed to promote places that are better for us?
What is Wellbeing, Community Wellbeing & Place?
Definitions - Wellbeing

Feeling good and functioning well. Depends on having access to the things that make life worthwhile.

- **Hedonic approach:** Well-being comes from striving for maximum pleasure and minimum pain. A dominant but short term wellbeing strategy – it is resource depleting.

- **Eudaimonic approach:** (ancient Greek good ‘eu’ and spirit ‘daimon’) Well-being comes from the pursuit of meaningful goals; ‘transcending oneself’ for the sake of the greater good. A longer term wellbeing strategy - it is resource sustaining.
Community Wellbeing – the Professionals View

- 315 professionals/practitioners working in the field of wellbeing surveyed.
- What is meant by the term community wellbeing?
  - 62%: “strong networks of relationships and support between people in a community, both in close relationships and friendships, and between neighbours and acquaintances”.
  - 35%: “people feeling able to take action to improve things in, and influence decisions about, their community”.
  - 30%: “people’s feelings of trust in, belonging to and safety in their community”.

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Examples of Community Wellbeing

Individual Altruism
“A tower block in which the warden decided to help develop the previously unconnected residents into a community, including a conservatory, cafe, gardens, etc., based on the concept of the world's oldest residential towers in Yemen. The block went from having empty flats to a waiting list to move in.”

Mutual Trust
“Being able to trust a number of your neighbours to look after your house or pets when you are away. Small actions like this that engender mutual trust are important to feeling a sense of community.”
The Built Environment & Wellbeing – Some Evidence

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Cities – are they good?

“In great cities men are brought together by the desire of gain. They are not in a state of co-operation, but of isolation, as to the making of fortunes; and for all the rest they are careless of neighbours. Christianity teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves; modern society acknowledges no neighbour.”

Benjamin Disraeli
Urban vs Rural

How we feel about our neighbourhoods?

Significant differences between how people in rural and urban areas feel about their neighbourhood

- Trust people in their neighbourhood: 78% rural, 61% urban
- Willing to help their neighbours: 81% rural, 67% urban
- Feel safe walking alone after dark: 82% rural, 71% urban
- Feel a sense of belonging: 72% rural, 61% urban

Source: Social capital across the UK, 2011 to 2012

Understanding Society Survey
The Urbanicity Effect

- **1938** - *Wirth*: Depression higher in urban compared to rural settings.

- **1939** - *Faris & Dunham*: “Mental disorders in urban areas”: Schizophrenia was much more common in deprived inner city Chicago than its affluent suburbs.

- **2001** *Pedersen & Mortensen*: A dose-response relationship between time spent in urban environments in childhood and risk.


- **2004** - *Sundquist et al*: Sweden - 4.4 million adults. Those living in the most densely populated areas had 68–77% more risk of developing psychosis and 12–20% higher risk of developing depression than the reference group.

- **2010** - *Peen, Schoevers, Beeckman & Dekker*: Meta-analysis of urban-rural differences of mood and anxiety disorder.

- **2012** - *Vassos et al*: Meta-analysis of urbanicity in schizophrenia.
“85% of people polled stated that the quality of public space has a direct impact upon their lives and the way they feel.”

SEEN & HEARD, DEMOS, NOVEMBER 2007

"Mount Fear"
Abigail Reynolds
Community Wellbeing – the People’s Views

“What makes a good place?”

66 views aired

I - Community Spirit; Good People & Neighbourliness

II - Nature & Open Space

III - A Clean Living Environment
Community Wellbeing – the People’s Views

“Where do you go to feel better?”
51 views expressed

I - Nature & Open Space
II - Family & Friends
III - Private Activities Diversions
Community Wellbeing – the People’s Views

“Where’s Your Dismaland?”
29 Views Aired

I - Aspects/Features Of City Living
II - Matters Of Governance/Politics
III - Being Alone
Wellbeing is a Place Variable

National data on subjective wellbeing: ONS

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Wellbeing Inequality is a Place Variable

Measuring wellbeing inequality in Britain

Overview

What is wellbeing inequality? Why is it important to measure, and which parts of the United Kingdom have higher or lower levels of wellbeing inequality? This paper attempts to answer these questions. It uses the ONS Annual Population Survey to analyse wellbeing inequality in the United Kingdom. We have calculated wellbeing inequality measures for 143 local authorities between 2011 and 2015. We have also calculated wellbeing inequality for a larger number of local authorities (203 or 380) where data from three years of the survey has been pooled together, producing three-year rolling averages.

This paper also shows how these inequalities have changed over time. Additionally, it calculates a set of alternative wellbeing inequality measures, which highlights the many ways the concept can be measured.

Discussion of these alternative measures, and more details on our methodology can be found in our methods paper and the full data set can be downloaded from the What Works Centre for Wellbeing website in Excel format for anyone to use.

Housing & Wellbeing

What does the scoping review and this briefing cover?

This is a broad overview of all published reviews on the links between housing and housing interventions and both individual and community wellbeing.

We asked you what was important for wellbeing and a resounding reply was housing. The physical and social place where we live has impact on our personal wellbeing. It also impacts other factors which influence our wellbeing, our health, our relationships, even educational outcomes.

There can be a number of complex interconnections between these, which can intensify issues. Those with poor health may also have poor social connections and lack the opportunities for better housing.

What have we already know about the links between housing and wellbeing? Many reviews have already gathered the evidence under specific themes. The scoping review pulls together what already exists. It summarises findings from 56 published reviews. The aim is to understand where there are still gaps in our understanding.

The scoping review is based on a broad view of wellbeing that encompasses the following dimensions, as defined by the Office of National Statistics:
- Personal (subjective) wellbeing
- Our relationships
- Health
- What we do
- Where we live
- Personal finance
- Education and skills
- Governance
- The economy

“A lot of people are living in awful housing. That has a knock-on effect on everything else, their mental health and within the community.”

- participant in the communities public dialogue, 2015

The scoping review does not include evidence that has not been included in a published journal.


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Wellbeing & Deprivation in Wards

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<thead>
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Depression & Deprivation in Wards

CLAHRC NWC

Neighbourhood	Mean
GREYFRIARS	1.2356
WILPSHIRE	1.3172
CHILDWALL	1.3193
HELSBY	1.3267
BLUNDELLSANDS	1.3496
NORBRECK	1.3539
BEARDWOOD with LAMMACK	1.3601
SWANSIDE	1.3991
DEEPDALE	1.4077
WORSLEY	1.4367
HALTON CASTLE	1.4462
CAMBRIDGE	1.463
CHURCH	1.4659
VICTORIA	1.4722
MILL HILL	1.4835
VIVARY BRIDGE	1.488
MOORCLOSE	1.5011
WINSFORD OVER and VERDIN	1.5261
OLD SWAN	1.5377
DUKE'S	1.5838
FAZAKERLEY	1.5858
DITTON	1.5904
SUDELL	1.5959
ST GEORGE'S	1.6039
ELLESMORE PORT	1.611
MOSS BAY	1.6181
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Anxiety & Deprivation in Wards

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### Place Characteristics - which place variables are related to MH&W?

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<th>Use of open space</th>
<th>Level of reported incivilities</th>
<th>Level of community trust</th>
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<td>wellbeing</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
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Reported level of incivilities - the visible cues to impoverishment, threat and poor place stewardship.
Urbanity or ‘Quality’?

- Photo contemplation studies show that urban vs rural residential photos matched for perceived quality do not differ in how they change psychological responses.
- While residential photos that differ in perceived quality (matched for greenness) do alter responses differently.
Walking the City: Mobile Data Collection

The South Liverpool Walking Study:

- **Picton Ward.** Almost 40% of the residents here are working class or not working. 76.4% of neighbourhoods in this ward fall within the most deprived 5% nationally.

- **Princes Park Ward.** Very similar to Picton, but with higher rates of child poverty, but reduced reported crime and higher house values.

- **Greenbank Ward.** Whilst the statistics are generally less severe than Picton and Princes Park, the neighbourhoods the walk passes through is indistinguishable from them.

- **St Michael’s Ward.** Over 70% of residents are middle and upper middle class. 22.1% of the area is in the 10% most deprived (notably flanking the walk), far less than the Liverpool average 49.6%.


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What do People Notice?

1. St. Michael’s Station
2. Dalmeny Street
3. Alibburgh Road
4. Lucerne Street
5. Sefton Grove
6. Aigburth Drive
7. Eros
8. Ullet Road
9. Obelisque
10. Croxteth Road
11. Bently Road
12. Tiber
13. Matlind Street
14. The Boundary
15. Speke Island Road
16. Edge Hill Station
Places Change Beliefs

Sentiment Analysis:
Expression of sentiment within salient feature descriptors correlates with on-the-spot sense of:

- threat = -0.45: trust = 0.63
- wealth/resource = 0.65: community spirit = 0.58
Desirability as Perceived Resource
Co-Design of Places

Thematic Analysis
- Increased ‘responsibility’ for place.
- Increasing ‘implicit mastery’.
- An ‘allocentric’ consideration of place.
- ‘Optimism’.
- ‘Co-operative’ decision-making.

VISION – Group 1
The Reader Organisation will create a new heart for Calderstones: building a cultural community for the benefit of the city.

OBJECTIVES
- Create an accessible cultural hub for the local community
- Realise the heritage and landscape assets of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the reader organisation
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes

VISION – Group 2
The Reader Organisation will create a relaxing, inclusive and sustainable home for a cluster of cultural pursuits with reading as its foundation.

OBJECTIVES
- Facilitate a range of accessible and inclusive cultural activities
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes
- Provide an exemplar 21st century suburban neighbourhood
- Realise the attractions of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the Reader Organisation

Corcoran et al. CoDesign (accepted in revision)

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A Common Sense of Place

Kevin Lynch ‘The Image of The City’

Connectivity & Movement

The importance of visual cues

Cooperation

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Community Wellbeing Evidence Appearing Soon

[Image of a table and graph showing various activities and time periods]
Community Evidence Programme

Systematic reviews
- Concepts, definitions, indicators and measurement of community wellbeing.
- Housing for vulnerable people.

- Encouraging wellbeing via Social relations in the built environment.
- Wellbeing and co-production: joint decision making in Places.

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Community Evidence Programme

Secondary Data Analysis

- How do changes in local authority wellbeing inequality relate to changes in local conditions?

Analysis on the drivers of wellbeing inequality at local authority level. We'll focus on a local level to help policy makers and those working in communities to understand how inequalities can be reduced.

- Can variation in average individual wellbeing overtime be predicted by changes in local area conditions?
Theory, Wellbeing and the Built environment – Understanding the links
The Need for Theory: Green Space and Wellbeing Evidence

Evidence Tends to be Epidemiological such as:

...and begs the Questions:

- What kind of wellbeing?
- How does it enable community wellbeing?
- How long does the wellbeing effect last?
- How do we understand this?
- How do we test against competing hypotheses?
- Access to is not the same as using.
- Etc..etc..
The Need for Theory: Green Space and Wellbeing Evidence

Psychological benefits of greenspace increase with biodiversity
Richard A Fuller, Katherine N Irvine, Patrick Devine-Wright, Philip H Warren, Kevin J Gaston
Published 22 August 2007, DOI: 10.1098/rsbl.2007.0149

Abstract

The world’s human population is becoming concentrated into cities, giving rise to concerns that it is becoming increasingly isolated from nature. Urban public greenspaces form the arena of many people’s daily contact with nature and such contact has measurable physical and psychological benefits. Here we show that these psychological benefits increase with the species richness of urban greenspaces. Moreover, we demonstrate that greenspace users can more or less accurately perceive species richness depending on the taxonomic group in question. These results indicate that successful management of urban greenspaces should emphasize biological complexity to enhance human well-being in addition to biodiversity conservation.

- A role for biodiversity?
- A link to evolution?
- The human drive to forage for resources?
Perceived Resource in the Living Environment

Behavioural Choices and Wellbeing:

- Perceived availability of ‘resources’ within an environment determines extent of future discounting.

- Low resource environments prime implicit choices towards hedonism/immediate gratification.

- We tend to wait better and plan more for the future when we have clear foresight and can predict future resource availability.
A Theory for Socially Sustainable Places

*Life History Theory* shows how the qualities of an environment directly determine our life strategies and our wellbeing, emphasising the importance of place design.

Where resources are stable, reliable and predictable, people plan their futures and develop the capacity to adapt to inevitable life stresses, to change and cooperate with other future oriented people they encounter in their communities.

Where resources are unstable, unreliable and unpredictable prime thrill seeking and un-cooperative impulsive, self-centered choices become the norm.

Harsh environments and the behaviours they prime have significantly negative impacts on sustainability.
A Theory of Change

Changing Places Changes Futures.

South et al. (2017)
Community wellbeing evidence programme.

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Next Steps in Policy and Practice: Some Ideas
Cross Sector Collaboration

Town Teams & Place Directorates

- What would happen if we were all one authority?
- Lambeth’s Wellbeing Network est. 2010 - The Built Environment and Wellbeing network event Coin Street Neighbourhood Centre 29.11.11

- “We exist inside the built environment – it’s like asking a tortoise if his shell is important”
Recent Policy into Practice Developments

Healthy New Towns

We are working with ten housing developments to shape the health of communities, and to rethink how health and care services can be delivered. This programme offers a golden opportunity to radically rethink how we live – and takes an ambitious look at renewing hearts through the built environment.

In March 2018 we launched a rigorous selection process for the developments we’re working with.

In the NHS Five Year Forward View, a clear commitment to health, and integrate health and care services, we recognised the need to build over 200,000 new homes of interest from developments across the country.

Halton Lea, Runcorn

We are building a connected, Healthy New Town - connected by its people, connected by its aspirations; connected by its environment; connected by technology and connected by place. The development at Halton Lea, Runcorn, has the potential to regenerate the area into a thriving community hub, with new opportunities for social and community activities, healthy retail provision and integrated housing, health and social care provision.

Our ‘One Halton’ model of care and support is focused on enhancing services in the community and ensuring easy access to those services. We are focussing on developing a health and wellbeing ecosystem, with people at the heart of it, and an infrastructure that supports wellbeing and health.
Encouraging Community Wellbeing

From Claiming the Public Realm to Governance of the Commons

“A once run down, crime ridden area has been given a new sense of pride for the individuals to live in due to one street deciding to come together to do little things i.e. plant flowers and shrubs and discourage their children throwing litter around etc. It has made a huge difference over time and led to people appearing to smile more.”

“Spread & growth of 'Playing Out' activities. This is where streets are closed to traffic for short periods of time, but opened-up to children and adults to play, talk, interact and socialise. This has the potential to increase exercise for children, reduce isolation and loneliness, allow neighbours to get to know one-another, builds trust, understanding, increases safety in that people look out for one-another and much more.”
Clear & Useful Policy Based on Terms & Definitions


- Eudiamonic or meaningful/ purposeful/ well places.
- NOT Hedonic (aka) HAPPY places – unsustainable.
- Avoid easy ‘technical’ ‘branding’ fixes.
- NOT only economic purpose.
Well-Design – a Policy Provocation

Can the ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ deliver place-making principles?

http://www.urbandesignmentalhealth.com/journal1-planning4wellbeing.html
Get Connected
Well-Design should prioritise and facilitate legible connections to and between potential hubs and gathering places, and remove barriers to everyday interactions.

Be Active
Well-design should promote active movement to and between potential hubs and gathering places to facilitate the pursuit of everyday physical activity.

Take Notice
Well-design should promote people’s conscious awareness of place, of each other and our relationships.
Well-design

Keep Learning
Well-design should embrace ‘co-production’ to enable individuals to learn about and so develop an allocentric response to and sense of place.

Give
Well-design should include flexible places and environments that prioritise, accommodate and give explicit consent to cooperative community activity.

Well-design should encourage, facilitate and enable people to volunteer their time as a form of ‘stewardship’ in the pursuit of good places to live.
Conclusions

We can change the association between place, low wellbeing and mental ill-health by understanding:

- The connection between individual psychology and our human ecology.
- Implicit human responses to place - the importance of cues to threat and low resource.
- That what we sense begins with the hard-wired question “Can I thrive here?” – the answer guides our perceptions about place quality and desirability.
- That these perceptions drive wider inferences about people in place – embedding stigma as well as resource allocation strategies.
- That we can use evidence based guidance and policy to directly address wellbeing in place.